

a one-time visual inspection to determine the modification status of the corners of the forward lower cargo doorjamb; low-frequency eddy current (LFEC) inspections to detect cracks of the fuselage skin and doubler at all corners of the forward lower cargo doorjamb; various follow-on repetitive inspections; and modification, if necessary. The action also proposed to retain the existing requirements, but require certain high-frequency, rather than low-frequency, eddy current inspections for certain conditions.

Comments

Interested persons have been afforded an opportunity to participate in the making of this amendment. Due consideration has been given to the comments received.

Request To Extend Repetitive Inspection Interval

One commenter asks that the repetitive inspection interval specified in paragraph (b)(1)(i)(A) of the proposed AD be extended from 3,500 landings to 3,860 landings. The commenter states that this would permit inspection of affected areas during a scheduled maintenance visit.

The FAA does not agree with the commenter's request. Insufficient supporting data were provided to us to substantiate the request. In developing an appropriate compliance time for this action, we considered not only the degree of urgency associated with addressing the subject unsafe condition, but the manufacturer's recommendation as to an appropriate compliance time, and the practical aspect of accomplishing the required inspections within an interval of time that parallels normal scheduled maintenance for the majority of affected operators. No change to the final rule is necessary in this regard.

Request for Deferral of Upgrade or Replacement of Previously Approved Repairs

The same commenter asks that upgrade or replacement of certain repairs, as specified in paragraph (c) of the proposed AD, be deferred for a period of 24 months, providing the high frequency eddy current (HFEC) inspections find no evidence of cracking. The commenter states that this would pertain to an existing repair or modification that is not in accordance with the published structural repair manual (SRM) or rework drawing specifications, but has been approved for static strength by an original equipment manufacturer or FAA

Designated Engineering Representative (DER).

We do not agree with the commenter. We have conducted further analysis of this issue in conjunction with the manufacturer, and we have determined that, for the corners of the forward lower cargo door jamb that have been modified, but not in accordance with the DC-9 SRM or service rework drawing, an initial HFEC inspection of the fuselage skin adjacent to the existing repairs would not detect any cracking under the repairs. The absence of cracking outside a repaired area does not indicate that an acceptable level of safety is being maintained, since possible cracking under the repairs could grow rapidly and extend out from under the repaired area. No change to paragraph (c) of the final rule is necessary in this regard.

Request To Change Certain Language in Preamble

The same commenter states that the proposed AD should explicitly state that the new AD supersedes and cancels the requirements of the existing AD, to avoid a duplicate compliance requirement.

We do not agree with the commenter; the requested language is already in the proposed AD. The Summary section of the proposed AD states, "This document proposes the superseding of an existing airworthiness directive * * * The Summary section also specifies that the proposed AD retains the requirements in the existing AD, but requires HFEC rather than low frequency eddy current inspections for certain conditions. No change to the final rule is necessary in this regard.

Explanation of Editorial Change

We have changed the service bulletin citation throughout this final rule to exclude the Evaluation Form. (The form is intended to be completed by operators and submitted to the manufacturer to provide input on the quality of the service bulletin; however, this AD does not include such a requirement.)

Explanation of Changes to Final Rule

In the Summary section of the proposed AD, we inadvertently omitted identification of the X-ray inspection to detect cracks, which was required by AD 98-08-24. That inspection was, however, identified in the actions required by the proposed AD. We have changed the Summary section of this AD to include the following phrase: " * * low-frequency eddy current or X-ray inspections to detect cracks * * * "

The language in paragraph (f)(3) of the proposed AD has been changed from "An alternative method of compliance for any inspection or repair * * * " to "An alternative method of compliance that provides an acceptable level of safety may be used for any repair * * * " to clarify that a DER is not permitted to approve an inspection method.

Conclusion

After careful review of the available data, including the comments noted above, the FAA has determined that air safety and the public interest require the adoption of the rule with the changes previously described. The FAA has determined that these changes will neither increase the economic burden on any operator nor increase the scope of the AD.

Cost Impact

There are approximately 899 airplanes of the affected design in the worldwide fleet. The FAA estimates that 622 airplanes of U.S. registry will be affected by this AD.

The inspection that is currently required by AD 98-08-24, and retained in this AD, takes approximately 1 work hour per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the currently required actions is estimated to be \$60 per airplane.

Should an operator be required to accomplish an eddy current inspection, it will take approximately 1 work hour per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. Based on these figures, the cost impact of an eddy current inspection required by this AD is estimated to be \$60 per airplane.

Should an operator be required to accomplish the modification, it will take approximately 14 work hours per airplane to accomplish, at an average labor rate of \$60 per work hour. Required parts will cost approximately \$936 or \$2,807 per airplane, depending on the service kit purchased. Based on these figures, the cost impact of the modification required by this AD is estimated to be \$1,776 or \$3,647 per airplane.

No change to the parts cost or work hour estimate is anticipated as a result of the new actions included in this AD.

The cost impact figures discussed above are based on assumptions that no operator has yet accomplished any of the requirements of this AD action, and that no operator would accomplish those actions in the future if this AD were not adopted. The cost impact figures discussed in AD rulemaking